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## **PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESORTS OF THE UKRAINIAN BLACK SEA COAST UNDER WAR CONDITIONS AND POST WAR RECOVERY**

**H. Vykhovanets, A. Shashero**

**Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University**

H. Vykhovanets

Doctor of Geographical Sciences, Professor, Department of Economic and Social Geography and Tourism, Faculty of Geology and Geography, Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Shampanskyi Lane, 2, Odesa, 65015, Ukraine

A. M. Shashero

PhD in Geography, Associate Professor, Department of Economic and Social Geography and Tourism, Faculty of Geology and Geography, Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Shampanskyi Lane, 2, Odesa, 65015, Ukraine

### **Abstract**

Before 2022 the resort sector of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast provided a substantial share of the gross regional product of the coastal regions and generated a stable flow of domestic and foreign visitors. The full scale war confronted the regional resort sector with the need for a fundamental revision of its development model, since the pre war structure of demand and sources of investment became largely unavailable. The purpose of the article is to identify prospective directions for the development of the resorts of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast, taking into account world experience of recovering tourist destinations after wars and armed conflicts. The study applies comparative, cartographic and scenario methods of analysis, the information base included strategic documents on tourism and regional

development in Ukraine, damage and recovery needs assessments, and international scholarly literature on crisis management in tourism. It is established that world experience of post conflict recovery of resort destinations, in particular the Bosnian phenomenon of phoenix tourism, confirms the possibility of a relatively rapid return of tourist demand provided there is consistent rebuilding of security infrastructure and a deliberate rebranding of the destination. Three scenarios for the development of the resorts of the Black Sea coast up to 2030 are identified, namely an inertial scenario, a rehabilitation scenario and an innovative scenario, and the rehabilitation scenario is substantiated as the most realistic for the near term post war period.

**Key words:** resort management; phoenix tourism; post war recovery; development scenarios; Ukrainian Black Sea coast; crisis management in tourism.

## **ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ КУРОРТІВ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ПРИЧОРНОМОР'Я В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ ТА ПОВОЄННОГО ВІДНОВЛЕННЯ**

**Г. Вихованець**

доктор географічних наук, професор кафедри економічної та соціальної географії і туризму, геолого-географічний факультет, Одеський національний університет імені І.

І. Мечникова, Шампанський провулок, 2, Одеса, 65015, Україна

**А. М. Шашеро**

кандидат географічних наук, доцент кафедри економічної та соціальної географії і туризму, геолого-географічний факультет, Одеський національний університет імені І.

І. Мечникова, Шампанський провулок, 2, Одеса, 65015, Україна

**Анотація.** Курортна галузь Українського Причорномор'я до 2022 року забезпечувала значну частку валового регіонального продукту приморських областей і формувала стійкий потік внутрішніх та іноземних відпочивальників. Повномасштабна війна поставила курортну галузь регіону перед необхідністю принципового перегляду моделі розвитку, оскільки довоєнна структура попиту і джерела інвестицій виявилися здебільшого недоступними. Метою статті є визначення перспективних напрямів розвитку курортів Українського Причорномор'я з урахуванням світового досвіду відновлення туристичних дестинацій після воєн і збройних конфліктів. У дослідженні застосовано порівняльний, картографічний та сценарний методи аналізу, інформаційною базою слугували стратегічні документи розвитку туризму та

регіонального розвитку України, матеріали оцінки збитків і потреб відновлення, а також міжнародна наукова література з кризового менеджменту в туризмі. Встановлено, що світовий досвід постконфліктного відновлення курортних DESTINAЦІЙ, зокрема боснійський феномен туризму фенікса, підтверджує можливість відносно швидкого повернення туристичного попиту за умови послідовної відбудови інфраструктури безпеки і цілеспрямованого ребрендингу DESTINAЦІЙ. Визначено три сценарії розвитку курортів Причорномор'я до 2030 року, а саме інерційний сценарій, реабілітаційний сценарій та інноваційний сценарій, і обґрунтовано перспективність реабілітаційного сценарію як найбільш реалістичного для найближчого повоєнного періоду.

**Ключові слова:** курортна справа; туризм фенікса; повоєнне відновлення; сценарії розвитку; Українське Причорномор'я; кризовий менеджмент у туризмі.

### **Introduction**

For decades resort management on the Ukrainian Black Sea coast has formed one of the leading specialisations of the coastal regions, providing employment, revenue for local budgets and stable demand for tourist and recreational services [1, 2]. Researchers of the territorial organisation of recreational activity in the region have repeatedly pointed to the high natural resource potential of the coast and, at the same time, to the unevenness of its development and insufficient diversification of the tourism product [1, 3, 4].

The full scale Russian invasion of February 2022 confronted the regional resort sector with the need for a fundamental revision of its development model. Part of the coast found itself within a zone of hostilities or temporary occupation, pre war sources of tourist demand and investment became largely unavailable, and the state tourism development policy, fixed as early as the pre war Strategy for the Development of Tourism and Resorts [5], requires substantial adjustment in light of new security and social realities [6, 7].

World practice has accumulated considerable experience of recovering tourist destinations after wars and armed conflicts. Researchers of crisis management in tourism have shown that a crisis does not always mean the final loss of a destination's tourist potential and, under certain conditions, can become the starting point for its reinvention and even for strengthening its competitive position [8, 9]. The most illustrative example of applying this approach to a post conflict destination is the study of tourism development in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war of 1992 to 1995, in which the concept of phoenix tourism was proposed, that is the revival of a tourist destination on the basis of a new identity that

incorporates the conflict experienced rather than concealing it [10].

The purpose of the article is to identify prospective directions for the development of the resorts of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast, taking into account world experience of recovering tourist destinations after wars and armed conflicts, and to substantiate scenarios of such development over the medium term.

### **Materials and methods**

The information base of the study consisted of strategic documents on tourism and regional development in Ukraine, in particular the Strategy for the Development of Tourism and Resorts up to 2026 [5] and the State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021 to 2027 [6], materials of the joint assessment of damage and recovery needs of Ukraine prepared by the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Union and the United Nations [7], Ukraine's National Recovery Plan [11], as well as scholarly publications on the territorial organisation of resort management on the Black Sea coast [1, 3, 4] and international scholarly literature on crisis management in tourism and the post conflict development of tourist destinations [8, 9, 10].

A comparative method was applied to compare the pre war and current structure of the regional resort sector, a cartographic method for the spatial differentiation of destinations by level of security accessibility, and a scenario method for constructing alternative trajectories of development of the resorts of the Black Sea coast over the medium term up to 2030.

### **Results and discussion**

#### **Pre war state and structural preconditions of the resort sector of the Black Sea coast**

Before 2022 the resort sector of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast rested on three interrelated components, namely the natural resource base of maritime climate, therapeutic mud and mineral waters, a developed network of sanatorium and resort facilities mostly built in the Soviet period and in need of modernisation, and a growing segment of private hotels and boarding houses in coastal towns [1, 3, 4]. Studies of the qualimetric assessment of the region's recreational potential, carried out before the full scale invasion, revealed a substantial unevenness in its development, namely a concentration of tourist flows around Odesa and a few coastal centres against a background of weak investment in mainland and less well known coastal territories [3, 4].

A key structural problem of the sector on the eve of the war remained a high dependence on seasonal beach recreation and insufficient diversification of the tourism product towards health and wellness, event based or ecological tourism, which limited the

sector's resilience to external shocks [1, 2]. This structural vulnerability largely explains the depth of the decline in tourist flow after 2022 and, at the same time, forms the starting point for reconsidering the development model of the region's resorts.

### **World experience of recovering resort destinations after wars and conflicts**

Researchers of crisis management in tourism distinguish several types of crisis affecting tourist destinations, from natural disasters to armed conflicts, and show that the success of a destination's recovery depends less on the type of crisis than on the quality of the managerial response to it [8, 9]. A synthesis of experience across different crises shows that destinations able to quickly restore basic security infrastructure while simultaneously reconsidering their marketing position recover tourist demand considerably faster than those that attempt to literally reproduce the pre war model [9].

A telling example is the experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where researchers proposed the concept of phoenix tourism to describe the revival of a tourist destination after the war of 1992 to 1995 on the basis of a new identity that integrates the memory of the conflict as part of the tourism offer rather than trying to conceal it [10]. This example demonstrates that successful post war recovery of a destination is not a simple return to the pre war state but requires a deliberate reinvention of its tourist image that takes into account the new experience of the territory.

For the Ukrainian Black Sea coast these conclusions mean that the recovery strategy of the resort sector should not be oriented solely towards reproducing the pre war structure of demand focused on mass beach tourism, but must take into account the new social reality of the region, in particular the presence of veterans, internally displaced persons and a changed geography of security [7, 11].

### **Scenarios for the prospective development of the resorts of the Black Sea coast up to 2030**

On the basis of a synthesis of the pre war structural vulnerability of the sector and world experience of post conflict recovery of destinations, three alternative scenarios are proposed for the development of the resorts of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast up to 2030.

**Inertial scenario.** The regional resort sector recovers gradually and mostly spontaneously, without a targeted state strategy, oriented towards reproducing the pre war model of mass beach tourism within territories that remain safe. This scenario is characterised by the slowest pace of recovery of tourist flow and a high risk of preserving the pre war structural problems of the sector.

**Rehabilitation scenario.** Recovery of the resort sector is aligned with the needs of

medical, physical and psychological rehabilitation of veterans and internally displaced persons, part of the sanatorium and resort infrastructure is deliberately reoriented towards rehabilitation programmes, and the destination's marketing position is reconsidered in light of the new social demand, by analogy with the logic of phoenix tourism [10].

**Innovative scenario.** Recovery of the resort sector is accompanied by deep diversification of the tourism product towards health and wellness, event based and ecological tourism, attraction of private and international investment into new infrastructure, and active rebranding of the destination on the international market. This scenario requires the greatest resources and time, but forms a sector structure most resilient to future shocks.

A comparison of the scenarios by the criteria of speed of recovery, resource requirements and resilience to future shocks allows the rehabilitation scenario to be regarded as the most realistic benchmark for the near term post war period, since it combines relatively rapid activation of part of the resort infrastructure with a response to actual social demand, while leaving room for a gradual transition towards elements of the innovative scenario in the longer term.

#### **Priority mechanisms for implementing the rehabilitation scenario**

Implementation of the rehabilitation scenario requires the coordinated action of several mechanisms. The first is targeted investment in rehabilitation infrastructure based on the most valuable natural therapeutic resources of the region, in particular the therapeutic mud of coastal estuaries, taking into account the priorities of Ukraine's National Recovery Plan [11]. The second is the development of public private partnership to attract private investment into that part of the resort infrastructure which does not require immediate budget financing, in particular the segment of wellness and spa services for the domestic market [2].

The third mechanism is a deliberate rebranding of the region's resort destinations that takes into account the new experience of the territory, which implies integrating the theme of resilience and recovery into the marketing communication of destinations rather than concealing it [9, 10]. The fourth mechanism is preparing the human resource potential of the resort sector to work with new categories of visitors, in particular veterans with special medical needs, which requires updating the educational programmes for training resort management specialists [2].

#### **Conclusions**

The analysis of the prospects for the development of the resorts of the Ukrainian Black Sea coast has shown that the pre war structural vulnerability of the sector, namely a high dependence on seasonal beach tourism and weak diversification of the tourism product,

largely explains the depth of the sector's crisis after 2022. World experience of the post conflict recovery of tourist destinations, in particular the concept of phoenix tourism, shows that effective recovery requires not the reproduction of the pre war model but a deliberate reinvention of the destination's tourist image that takes into account the experience endured.

Of the three proposed scenarios for the development of the region's resorts up to 2030, the inertial, the rehabilitation and the innovative, the rehabilitation scenario has been identified as the most realistic benchmark for the near term post war period, since it combines rapid activation of part of the resort infrastructure with a response to actual social demand for the rehabilitation of veterans and internally displaced persons. Further research should be directed towards developing detailed investment models for implementing the rehabilitation scenario for individual resort destinations of the region.

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